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Compassion and the Tax Cuts

President Bush is planning a victory lap today for his latest round of tax cuts, visiting Philadelphia to signal the first mailings of \$400 government checks to 25 million middle-class families entitled to expanded child credits. Missing from the photo opportunity, unless the president plans something truly dramatic, will be any children from poor families left out of the child-credit boon while the Republican-controlled Congress continues to wrangle over this shameful omission.

When the slight to the neediest first became clear six weeks ago, the White House claimed that the president wanted Congress to quickly repair the damage so 6.5 million poor families could share in the benefit. Since then Mr. Bush has made no obvious effort to broker a solution between House and Senate Republican leaders who seem intent on a stalemate more than a solution. Their "compromise" proposals would include outrageous extra helpings of child credits for Americans earning more than \$150,000 a year. This would

add tens of billions of dollars to the deficit.

Only the president has the clout to engineer a true, less costly solution in the days remaining before Congress's summer recess. There are 12 million deserving children in poor families that are far more likely than the affluent to immediately spend the money in the economic stimulus Mr. Bush has been promising. As the Republican government's priorities become ever clearer, the status of the nation's poorest children is a prime litmus test for the G.O.P. vows of compassion.

In another crucial measure, Congress is proposing to tighten requirements for workers receiving temporary welfare aid — mandating 40 hours of work from them rather than the current 30. This means a parent will need more child-care aid in order to be free for the required low-wage job. Some 350,000 impoverished children will likely be denied care in the next five years. No help is in the offing as the Republicans shrink the federal revenue flow and channel tax cuts to the upper brackets.